



World Organisation  
for Animal Health  
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25th Conference of the  
Regional Commission for Africa  
Botswana, Gaborone, 21 to 24 February 2023

**FINAL REPORT**

## Introduction

1. Following the kind invitation of the Government of Botswana, the 25th Conference of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Regional Commission for Africa was held in Gaborone (Botswana) from 21 to 24 February 2023.
2. A total of 113 participants, comprising WOAH Delegates and representatives of 43 Members of the Region and senior officers from 15 regional, international, and national organisations and institutions, attended the Conference. In addition, representatives of the private sector as well as private veterinary organisations from the Region and from the host country were present.

Members of the Commission: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Rep., Chad, Comoros, Congo (Rep. of the ~), Congo (Dem. Rep. of the ~), Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau (online attendance), Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan (Rep. of), Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

International/regional/national organisations/institutions: AU-IBAR<sup>1</sup> AU-PANVAC<sup>2</sup>, ECOWAS<sup>3</sup>, EC<sup>4</sup>, EISMV<sup>5</sup>, FAO<sup>6</sup>, ICIPE<sup>7</sup>, IGAD<sup>8</sup>, IZS<sup>9</sup>, RAHC-ECCAS<sup>10</sup>, SADC<sup>11</sup>, US-DTRA<sup>12</sup>, USDA-APHIS<sup>13</sup>, WAEMU<sup>14</sup>, WAHO<sup>15</sup>, WHO<sup>16</sup>, and the World Bank.

3. His Excellency Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, the President of the Republic of Botswana, Hon. Fidelis M. Molao, Minister of Agriculture, other Ministers and Assistant Ministers, H.E. Ambassador Joseph André Nourrice, Deputy Executive Secretary SADC, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Members of Parliament, Permanent Secretary to the President, Representatives of International and Regional Organisations, Permanent Secretaries, Deputy District Commissioner of Gaborone District and other Senior government officials honoured the Conference with their presence during the official opening ceremony.
4. Dr Kefentse Motshegwa, Delegate Botswana, Dr Monique Eloit, Director General, Dr Honoré N'lemba Mabela, President of the Regional Commission for Africa and Delegate of Congo (Dem. Rep. of the), Dr Karim Tounkara, Regional Representative for Africa; Dr Moetapele Letshwenyo, Sub-Regional Representative for Southern Africa; Dr Samuel Wakhusama, Sub-Regional Representative for Eastern Africa and the Horn Africa, Dr Rachid Bouguedour, Sub-Regional Representative for North Africa, Dr Neo Mapitse, Head of the Regional Activities Department, and Dr Etienne Bonbon, President of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission, also participated in the Conference. The speakers presenting the two main Technical Items, namely Dr Henry Wamwayi, Animal health consultant, for Technical Item I, and Prof. Louis Nel, Executive Director, Global Alliance on Rabies Control's (GARC), for Technical Item II, honoured the Conference with their presence.

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<sup>1</sup> AU-IBAR: African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

<sup>2</sup> AU-PANVAC: Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre of the African Union

<sup>3</sup> ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

<sup>4</sup> EC: European Commission (DG Sante)

<sup>5</sup> EISMV: Ecole Inter-Etats des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinaires de Dakar (*Inter-State School of Veterinary Science and Medicine*)

<sup>6</sup> FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<sup>7</sup> ICIPE: International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology

<sup>8</sup> IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development

<sup>9</sup> IZS: *Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale*

<sup>10</sup> RAHC-ECCAS: Regional Animal Health Centre - Economic Community of Central African States

<sup>11</sup> SADC: Southern African Development Community

<sup>12</sup> US-DTRA: United States - Defence Threat Reduction Agency

<sup>13</sup> APHIS-USDA: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – The United States Department of Agriculture

<sup>14</sup> WAEMU: West African Economic and Monetary Union

<sup>15</sup> WAHO: West African Health Organization

<sup>16</sup> WHO: World Health Organization

## **TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023**

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### **Opening ceremony**

5. The following authorities gave a welcome address:
  - Hon. Fidelis Molao, Botswana Minister of Agriculture
  - Dr Monique Eloit, WOAHA Director General
  - H.E. Ambassador Joseph André Nourrice, Deputy Executive Secretary of the SADC Secretariat
  - H.E. Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, officially opened the Conference at 12:00 p.m.
6. Dr Honoré Robert N'lemba Mabela, President of the Regional Commission for Africa delivered a vote of thanks.

### **Approval of the Programme**

7. The Provisional Programme, including some slight modifications, was adopted (programme available in Annex 1).

### **Appointment of the Conference Committee**

8. The Conference Committee was elected by participants as follows:

Chairperson:	Dr Kefentse Motshegwa, Delegate of Botswana
Vice-Chairperson:	H.E Dr Gari Fikru Regassa, Delegate of Ethiopia
Rapporteur General:	Dr Doumbia Baba, Delegate of Mauritania

### **Appointment of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs**

9. Chairpersons and Rapporteurs were designated for the Technical Items and the Analysis of the Animal Health Situation as follows:

Technical Item I:	Dr Abakar Mahamat Nour Mallaye (Chad), (Chairperson) Dr Asma Kamili (Morocco), (Rapporteur)
Technical Item II:	Dr Albertina Bebsy Shilongo (Namibia), (Chairperson) Dr Mohamed Idriss Doumbouya (Guinea), (Rapporteur)
Analysis of the Animal Health Situation:	Dr Botlhe Michael Modisane (South Africa), (Chairperson) Dr Vessaly Kallo, (Côte d'Ivoire), (Rapporteur)

10. A video greeting message from Dr Hugo Federico Idoyaga Benítez, President of WOA World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay was presented to the Regional Commission.
11. Mr Nick Nwankpa, Director of AU-PANVAC, also addressed the Regional Commission on behalf of H.E. Mrs Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment of the African Union.

**WOAH:  
Improving animal health globally to ensure a better future for all**

12. Dr Monique Eloit, WOA Director General, presented a brief overview of WOA's work in support to its Members.
13. She began her address by reminding participants of the overarching mission of the Organisation which is to ensure animal health worldwide due to its direct impact on livelihoods of millions of families, on food security and food safety, without forgetting the impact on human health when animal diseases are transmissible to humans.
14. She mentioned that, to support its Members to face obvious challenges such as TADs<sup>17</sup>, emerging diseases, zoonosis and food borne diseases control, as well as new global challenges such as climate and socio economic changes, new consumption patterns, among other challenges that will require the Veterinary Services to adapt, the Organisation was working along several lines including its core mandate activities such as collection and dissemination of animal disease information and standards setting. She also mentioned the development of global strategies as well as ambitious capacity building programmes. Additionally, she highlighted that WOA was ready to update its strategies as well as revise its standards if necessary to better support its Members to face future challenges. She also recognised the need and willingness of the Organisation to integrate other areas of expertise so that animal health is addressed in a more holistic way.
15. The main conclusions from Dr Eloit's presentation were as follows:
  - It is key for WOA and its Members to take positions regarding key contemporary global challenges in order to ensure that the Organisation has a recognised voice beyond the Veterinary Services sector and to avoid being constrained to the field of livestock and trade. We all need to be very active in any political fora to ensure our voice is heard and considered in ongoing negotiations for future health governance of which animal health is a key element.
  - The first area of engagement of the organisation is related to animal health in the strict sense through strategies and initiatives targeting diseases such as FMD<sup>18</sup>, PPR<sup>19</sup>, Rabies and ASF<sup>20</sup>, many of which are addressed under the GF-TADs<sup>21</sup> umbrella.
  - Over the years the Organisation has also invested in new areas which are also key for the support of Veterinary Services mainly to respond to new challenges such as animal welfare, AMR<sup>22</sup>, Biological threat reduction, capacity building including distance learning, and also aquatic animal health and wildlife health.
  - Animal disease prevention is key however, it is not always about preventing spill over to humans, it is also about actions in the animal health sector to limit the drivers of the emergence.
  - Evaluation of economic impact of animal diseases was highlighted and appreciated by Delegates. The project was implemented following the request of Members and is a partnership between WOA and the University of Liverpool. More details were provided during the Friday session.

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<sup>17</sup> Transboundary animal disease(s)

<sup>18</sup> Foot-and-mouth disease

<sup>19</sup> Peste des petits ruminants

<sup>20</sup> African swine fever

<sup>21</sup> Global framework for the progressive control of TADs

<sup>22</sup> Antimicrobial Resistance

- There is key to ensure focal points training mainly for those topics such as aquatic animal health considering those activities are not always under the Veterinary Services direction thus, training and guidance from WOAHA is needed.
- Regarding the current emergency and spread of diseases such as Avian Influenza (AI), WOAHA has selected AI as a key topic to be discussed during the 90<sup>th</sup> General Session to assess the current situation and the available tools. Discussion will be focused in two main points: use of vaccines and wild birds surveillance.
- There is a clear need regarding improving diseases surveillance. Sharing information about disease circulation is an asset to ensure animal health globally.
- WOAHA is providing New Delegates training to ensure they are well prepared to comply with their duties. One of the main tools for training is WOAHA Training Platform which provides online learning opportunities for 16 competency packages.

### **Analysis of the Animal Health Situation in Members in the region during 2021 and 2022**

16. Dr Jenny Hutchison, Head of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD), provided participants with the analysis of reporting provided by Members in the Africa Region during 2021/2022 (report available in Annex 2). The main points presented were as follows:
- Work continued to optimise and evolve the WAHIS<sup>23</sup> platform to facilitate reporting in a user-friendly way. The optimised early warning module went live in September 2022 and important functionalities that were still outstanding are currently being developed. The focus of the programme over the next few months will shift to optimising the six-monthly reporting module and developing the annual report. The annual update of map shapefiles and reference tables went live on 1 January 2023. WOAHA remains grateful for the ongoing support and useful feedback provided by Focal Points and Members as we work together to enhance the platform.
  - Concerning HPAI<sup>24</sup>, the disease remains a serious concern for the world and the region. The seasonal waves of 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 were the ones with the highest number of countries and territories reporting HPAI in Africa (14 in each of the waves). While most countries and territories in the region have declared HPAI notifiable and conduct surveillance activities in poultry (approximately 80%), the level of surveillance activities in wild birds is highly variable (approximately 55% of countries report that no surveillance is in place), which can be a concern for early detection. From an early warning perspective, the median submission time after confirmation of an exceptional event (nine days) is significantly higher than the 24 hours delay indicated in the *Terrestrial Code*. Countries are reminded that surveillance accompanied by high quality information is key to support early detection and rapid response to potential threats to both animal and public health.
  - Concerning the three selected vector-borne diseases (CCHF<sup>25</sup>, RVF<sup>26</sup>, WNF<sup>27</sup>) a low percentage of countries report the implementation of surveillance activities. This might lead to (i) an increase in the risk of undetected circulation; (ii) delayed identification of the disease after its introduction in a country; and (iii) an underestimation of the real disease burden for animal and humans. Surveillance capacity is particularly poor in wildlife (two to four times lower than in domestic animals). In addition to the inadequate level of surveillance, countries and territories in the region have demonstrated a low level of compliance with time requirements for submission of alerts indicated in the *Terrestrial Code*, the median submission time after disease confirmation for all three vector-borne diseases being very long (CCHF = 50.1 days, RVF = 8 days, and WNF = 16.9 days).

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<sup>23</sup> World Animal Health Information System

<sup>24</sup> High pathogenicity avian influenza

<sup>25</sup> Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever

<sup>26</sup> Rift valley fever

<sup>27</sup> West Nile fever

- Concerning ASF, most ASF surveillance efforts are targeted at domestic pigs (surveillance in 80% of reporting countries and territories), while little surveillance is reported for wild suids. Several activities are organised in the region for ASF prevention and control, to achieve the main objectives of the WOA/FAO Global initiative for the Control of ASF.
- More than 80% of countries and territories reported PPR as notifiable and the implementation of surveillance activities, which demonstrates the engagement in the PPR Global Control and Eradication Strategy (GCES). On the other hand, although vaccination is key to achieving control and eradication, on average, only 64% of the countries and territories of Africa that report PPR as present also reported official vaccination.
- Regarding progress in the PPR GCES, for eight countries in the region, stage-related information was not available in 2021 and was assessed in 2022, which is a step forward. However, in the meantime, the situation in a few countries has deteriorated. African countries are encouraged by WOA/FAO to make stronger efforts in surveillance and control of the disease.
- Finally, concerning aquatic animal diseases the report highlighted that the region scores very low in all of the main indicators on compliance with aquatic animal disease reporting: very few events were reported through the early warning system during 2020-2021 (n=5); on average, only around 50% of the countries and territories have submitted six monthly reports since 2005; the median submission time after event confirmation is very high (35 days); and a very low percentage of countries and territories report that aquatic animal diseases are notifiable or that any surveillance activity is being implemented. Understanding and addressing the main barriers to transparency in disease reporting is one of the main objective of WOA/FAO Aquatic Animal Health Strategy.
- WOA/FAO Members in Africa are encouraged to make efforts to continue their commitment to disease surveillance, prevention and control for diseases of high impact in the region and to use the support tools that have been developed by WOA/FAO.

**Technical item I (with questionnaire):  
Eradication of peste des petits ruminants (PPR)**

17. Technical Item I, entitled “*Eradication of peste des petits ruminants (PPR)*”, presented by Dr Henry Wamwayi, Animal health consultant, prompted some discussions among participants, allowing the Regional Commission for Africa to elaborate a recommendation in accordance with WOA/FAO General Rules. Final recommendations are available in Annex 3.

**WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023**

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**Technical item II (without questionnaire):  
Elimination of dog-transmitted human rabies from Africa by 2030 - national strategies,  
legal frameworks, tools to track progress**

18. Technical Item II, entitled “Elimination of dog-transmitted human rabies from Africa by 2030 - national strategies, legal frameworks, tools to track progress”, presented by Prof. Louis Nel, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), prompted some discussions among participants, allowing the Regional Commission for Africa to elaborate a recommendation in accordance with WOA/FAO General Rules. Final recommendations are available in Annex 4.

**ONE HEALTH SESSION**

**One health in Africa: a regional context**

19. Dr Lillian Wambua, WOA/FAO Regional One Health Programme Officer, provided participants with a review of the One Health regional context following the zoonoses-related outbreaks and epidemiological events reported by Members through WAHIS. Diseases selected were Anthrax, Avian Influenza, Bovine tuberculosis, Rift Valley fever, and Rabies.

20. She then referred to the pathway to improve health security at the human-animal interface underlining the assessment of national capacities for International Health Regulations (IHR) and the *Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes*, joint roadmaps for the control of zoonoses, National Bridging Workshops (NBW), institutionalisation and operationalisation of One Health, and the adoption and implementation of the Tripartite zoonoses guide and Operational tools. All these tools facilitate an improved compliance with international health frameworks and an increased prevention, preparedness and response to zoonotic threats.
21. Key messages from the presentation were as follows:
- Zoonoses and other threats at the human-livestock-wildlife interface still remains a priority for Africa in light of national, continental and global health security.
  - Prevention of zoonotic health threats and future pandemics will require political will at the highest level, and effective multisectoral engagement of all appropriate stakeholders.
  - Consistent and timely reporting of cases and outbreaks to WAHIS is important for the epidemiological understanding of zoonoses and to anticipate impacts on trade, animal health and public health.
  - Reporting non-listed zoonoses e.g. haemorrhagic fevers (Ebola, Marburg, etc) and wildlife diseases by the Veterinary Authorities to WOAHA is highly encouraged; and
  - Members can request for technical support to control zoonoses from WOAHA and other Quadripartite organisations.

### **One Health Joint Plan of Action: Operationalisation under the Framework of the Quadripartite**

22. Dr Chadia Wannous, WOAHA One Health Senior Specialist, briefly presented the Global Quadripartite and Joint Plan of Action (JPA). Main points of conclusion were:
- One Health is an integrated unifying approach that mobilises multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.
  - One Health was already on the international agenda but COVID-19 crisis reiterated the importance of such an approach to better address current global challenges.
  - An increasing number of multidimensional health, water, energy, food security and biodiversity challenges require One Health collaboration, coordination, communication and capacity building.
  - Political commitment and international support are also key to ensure the success of such approach.
  - The 27th Tripartite Annual Executive Meeting (TEAM): agreed to jointly develop a strategy and action plan to prevent future zoonotic pandemics through the One Health approach. It is a unique opportunity for FAO, WOAHA, WHO and UNEP to stand together as a global coalition to jointly drive change and achieve the transformations desired.
  - The One Health JPA is a collaborative, participatory effort among FAO, WOAHA, WHO and UNEP supported by the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP). It uses a One Health approach to strengthen collaboration, communication, capacity building, and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human-animal-plant-environment interface. It also provides a framework for action and proposes a set of activities the four organisations can provide together to advance and sustainably scale up One Health. Finally, it foresees resource mobilisation and aims to make good use of resources across sectors and stakeholders.



- The One Health JPA is key to avoiding a one size fits for all attitude. It was officially launched during the One Health Global Congress that took place in Singapore from 7 to 10 November 2022. A stepwise and tailored approach will be key to ensure operationalisation of this approach.
- A regional Quadripartite coordination mechanism ensures alignment and translation of activities at regional and national level.

### **Country experience in operationalisation of One Health strategy/action plan:**

#### **Cameroon:**

23. Dr Conrad Nkuo, Permanent Secretary of the National Programme for the Prevention and Control of Emerging and Re-emerging Zoonoses in Cameroon, briefly presented the historical and institutional framework of the One Health strategy and zoonoses programme in Cameroon highlighting, among others, the fact that improving the health of the population through a global approach which favours intersectoral synergy was one of the key factors that helped the establishment of the One Health institutional framework and the development of a zoonoses programme in Cameroon . Cameroon has made progress in the institutionalisation of One Health, which is anchored in the Prime Minister's office. This structure has enabled seamless coordination, communication and collaboration between government agencies and partners, facilitating multisectoral interventions at the human, animal, plant and ecosystem interfaces. However, challenges still exist in the multisectoral collaboration in the domains of interventions of the various actors of the One Health Platform. Nevertheless, with the definition of One Health in the Joint Plan of Action (JPA), and the elaboration of the six action tracks as well as the positioning of One Health interventions at the interfaces, Cameroon manages to overcome conflicts. Cameroon commends the continued support of the WOAHA and other technical and financial partners, to align the One Health efforts with the JPA, and work towards improving global health security.

#### **Kenya:**

24. Dr Matthew Muturi, Co-Director of the Zoonotic Disease Unit (ZDU), provided details about the One Health platform ZDU in Kenya which is anchored under the office of the Veterinary Services and the one for Public Health, co-led by the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Director General of Health. The three main objectives of the One Health platform are: strengthening the implementation of the One Health approach, strengthening the prevention, surveillance, response and control of priority zoonotic diseases, and promoting operational research. Due to the devolved system of governance in Kenya, the presenter highlighted the importance of also operationalising One Health at sub-national level including identifying specific One Health drivers, as well as needs and tailored interventions at sub-national level. A shift from project-based to systems-based interventions is key for a sustainable operationalisation of One Health. The presenter also emphasised that operational research was crucial to generate data for evidence-based decision making.

#### **Senegal:**

25. Dr Papa Seck, One Health senior advisor to the President of the Republic of Senegal, explained that the success in institutionalisation of the One Health approach in Senegal has been the high level of buy-in, commitment and uptake by the national authorities at the highest level, with the One Health platform being established in the office of the Prime Minister. Senegal's country experience described successes in multisectoral collaboration within the animal-human-wildlife-environment health actors, but also, with other non-health sectors. The investments to fund the One Health initiative are critical. A dedicated budget for One Health from the national treasury is needed.

### **Intervention from the World Bank**

26. Dr Frank Berthe, Senior Livestock Specialist of the Agriculture Global Practice of the World Bank, provided examples regarding the importance of investing in prevention and preparedness which in the end come with positive returns on investment. From the economic point of view, the more interventions are delayed, the more costs increase. He provided details regarding the work of the World Bank and its contribution to the mainstreaming of the One Health approach at the One Planet Summit, G20, G7, and the 74th World Health Assembly. He also mentioned that specific publications have been released in order to build a strong knowledge based on One Health.



27. He gave details about the investments in countries and regions under the One Health approach such as the REDISSE<sup>28</sup> project in west and central Africa (supporting surveillance and epidemic preparedness) and IDA<sup>29</sup>20 project to support at least 20 countries to mainstream One Health and strengthen implementation.
28. He concluded that the World Bank is working with countries to implement their development programmes and is also seeking opportunities to scale up the One Health financing, including catalysing funding for One Health through trust funds and influencing external financing instruments. He then provided the audience with more information about access to the Pandemic Fund for which an Expression of Interest (EIO) must be sent to the World Bank by 25 February 2023 (*refer to the information note sent by WOAHA to all Delegates on 11/02/2023*).

### **Implementing One Health in Africa Experiences and lessons from the EBU-SURSY project**

29. Through very concrete examples, Dr Sophie Muset, EBO-SURSY Project Manager, presented how the EBO-SURSY project, which is multisectoral in nature, was implemented using the One Health approach in an organic way across all its activities: from communication to capacity building and to scientific research. Among the main results highlighted were:
- Capacity building provided to targeted groups such as national focal points and health professionals, based on the different identified needs, helped them to perform their professional duties while contributing to the One Health approach.
  - Communication tools developed reached stakeholders from multiple sectors allowing for the strengthening of collaboration and communication.
  - Regional workshops conducted allowed the development of national multisectoral surveillance protocols.

### **Open discussion on One Health**

30. The different presentations under the One Health Session prompted lively debates among the Regional Commission Members allowing the following conclusions:
- It is key for Members to ensure leadership at national level so that the animal health sector be well involved in the One Health agenda, responsibilities regarding One Health well shared between the relevant parties, and contribution of the Veterinary Services to the global health be well recognised by the other relevant actors and in particular by the human health counterparts.
  - Delegates expressed their concern regarding the fact that Veterinary Services in several countries are still being neglected when it comes to the comprehension, implementation and resources allocation regarding One Health.
  - WOAHA is actively working in order to ensure that the voice of Veterinary Services is heard in all relevant political fora in which the global health governance is discussed. WOAHA has invested a lot of efforts to play an active role in the Tripartite and Quadripartite, in G7, and G20, as well as during key ministerial encounters. Additionally, key notes, guidelines and information are permanently shared with Members as well as panel discussions and relevant activities organised in order to provide Members with all the necessary elements to work at national level and advocate for relevant ministers to commit and create a national platform for One Health implementation.
  - WOAHA's work has already yielded positive results, one concrete example is the Pandemic Fund presented by the World Bank for which the PVS Pathway is considered as one of the selection criteria.

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<sup>28</sup> Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement

<sup>29</sup> International Development Association (World Bank)

- Members were encouraged to better engage by taking advantage of all the support provided by WOAHA in order to mobilise their national authorities and ensure the proper involvement of Veterinary Services in the One Health approach. Members need to identify themselves as representatives of the health sector.
- It is clear that ensuring coordination with the human health sector is not an easy task, however, starting with small steps of involvement and interaction will already help Members to advance.

### **User friendly biomarker-based animal trypanosomiasis diagnosis**

31. Dr Merid Negash Getahun from ICIPE, presented a user friendly biomarker-based trypanosomiasis diagnosis for animals. Among the main conclusions of the presentation:
- The livestock sector supports more than 1.3 billion producers and retailers, and contributes 40–50% to the agricultural GDP. Among the various positive services that livestock farming systems provide to ecosystem is diversifying soil pathogens and nutrient that strongly influence soil health and productivity. Livestock's positive role is often misunderstood and minimised, due to its role in greenhouse gases emission, and the need for sustainable livestock farming, among others.
  - Livestock productivity is significantly affected by *vector borne diseases* (VBDs) especially in the Africa region.
  - Animal trypanosomiasis diagnosis has been challenging due to the technicality of the current diagnostic tools, i.e. PCR and microscopy. To facilitate access to animal trypanosomiasis diagnosis the use of reliable simple organic compounds biomarkers have been applied.
  - The test sensitivity of these biomarkers is quite similar to PCR for trypanosomiasis testing. The test can even be successfully conducted on asymptomatic cases or early in the infection. However, there is need to screen against more diseases (e.g. anaplasmosis) to be confident about its specificity.
  - In terms of the reagents' cost per animal, it seems biomarkers are more advantageous. The reagent is stable at room temperature and therefore suitable for field conditions. Urine is the sample of choice. Hence, samples can be easily collected in the field, without any preservation problems, and then processed in the laboratory.
  - The need for collaboration in order to make biomarkers applicable and available for field use was underlined by the speaker.

### **Occurrence of foot-and-mouth disease in Africa: special reference to the incursion of FMD Serotype O into Southern Africa**

32. Dr Mokganedi Mokopasetso from the Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI, a WOAHA Reference Laboratory for FMD) presented the occurrence of FMD in Africa with special reference to the incursion of FMD serotype O into Southern Africa. He provided an overview of FMD based on Members reports submitted through WAHIS. BVI as a WOAHA Reference Laboratory provides support to the Africa Members for confirmatory diagnosis, characterisation of FMDV isolates, vaccine matching, capacity building and field technical support.
33. He informed the Conference that the laboratory receives most of its samples from Southern Africa Members, followed by Eastern Africa. In his presentation, Dr Mokopasetso provided some details on the situation in all African sub-regions between 2018-2023. In this period, FMD outbreaks were reported in 5, 14, 3, 11 and 8 Members from North, West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa respectively. Serotype O was the predominant serotype in all sub-regions except in Southern Africa, where SAT2 was dominant. Considering the isolated case reported in 2001 in South Africa followed by another case in 2016 in Mauritius, the presentation went through the first incursion of FMD serotype O in some Southern African Members in 2018 starting in Zambia and its movement in a 4-year period to Namibia, Mozambique and Malawi. Phylogenetic analysis has confirmed that isolates from all 5 Members are related.

34. The presentation identified some challenges including: i) transhumance and illegal movement, ii) poor vaccination coverage or impact, iii) low numbers of submission of samples and iv) difficulties in transportation of samples to the reference laboratories. It was recommended to Members to follow a coordinated approach utilising the GF-TADs coordination mechanism and its tools. Additionally, using the PVS tool to improve Veterinary Services and the WAHIS system for early warning and surveillance. Furthermore, utilise the Reference Laboratories available within the Region. In conclusion, it was recommended to deal with the serotype O incursion with more attention through better coordination and synchronisation of vaccination programmes across border areas, facilitation of safe trade in border communities, facilitation of FMD samples movement across borders to the Reference Laboratories (Botswana and South Africa) and finally the creation of a regional vaccine/antigen bank.

### **Twinning as a tool for promoting scientific expertise/excellence**

35. Dr Massimo Scacchia, designated expert at the WOAHA Reference Laboratory for CBPP<sup>30</sup> and ERFAN<sup>31</sup> Secretariat provided a brief presentation regarding the WOAHA Laboratory Twinning Programme founded in 2006 in order to support the development of veterinary laboratory expertise in underserved regions, improving regional and global capacity for disease prevention, detection and control, food security, food safety and public health through capacity building and networking. He shared the success stories of twinning projects and encouraged Members to apply for such projects. However he reiterated the need for commitment from Members. Main conclusions of the presentation are:
- Sixteen (16) new WOAHA Reference Centres have been designated as direct result of participation in a WOAHA Laboratory Twinning Project. It proves that WOAHA's Laboratory Twinning is an excellent tool for the technical growth of African laboratories.
  - Veterinary diagnostic laboratories are essential for a better understanding of animal diseases, including zoonoses, to improve human health, optimise livestock production, and the production of more effective vaccines.
  - WOAHA Twinning Projects are key to increase the number and quality of WOAHA Reference Centres in Africa.
  - The speaker called on all Members to engage in the application process and reiterated that very few African laboratories are recognised as WOAHA Reference Laboratories.
  - A twinning programme should last for the time needed by the applicant (candidate) laboratory to become independent, with the aim of ensuring sustainability.
  - The ERFAN Network was established in 2017 to join forces in providing common responses to global challenges and give WOAHA Twinning Projects continuity. It supports the pillar of scientific excellence, as result of WOAHA Twinning Projects, enhances collaboration among WOAHA Reference Centres and the network partners, improves laboratory performances of partner institutions involved through networking, exchanging knowledge, training and research, and identifies regional research needs.
  - The application procedure is available on WOAHA website ([Laboratory Twinning - WOAHA](#)) and Members can always count on their Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives to be assisted in the process.

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<sup>30</sup> Contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia

<sup>31</sup> Enhancing Research for Africa Network

### **Veterinary Workforce Development essential for Animal Disease Control/Eradication**

36. Dr Simon Kihu, WOAHA Programme Officer for Veterinary Workforce Development (VWD) and PPR, started his presentation explaining what the needs of Veterinary Services are in terms of workforce, considering the critical role they play in society thanks to their contribution towards efforts to control and prevent threats such as animal diseases, foodborne illnesses, antimicrobial resistance and communicable diseases between animals and humans. Main conclusions from his presentation are as follows:
- A strong and capable veterinary workforce is the pillar to efficient and effective performance of both public and private functions of Veterinary Services.
  - Human resources are the backbone of any organisation, with the right mix of skilled personnel, at the right place and time being key for good performance.
  - Veterinary Services in Africa are faced with challenges directly affecting the veterinary workforce such as inadequate workforce, lack of sufficient training and field experience among animal health personnel, resistance to change in public services, poorly understood needs to define the roles of the public and private sectors, lack of reform in educational institutions, inadequate regulation of veterinarians and VPPs<sup>32</sup>, and inadequate gender equity. All this compromises the sustainability of national investments in the livestock sector, public health and the livelihood of producers.
  - Through its programme for Veterinary Workforce Development, WOAHA supports Members to evaluate their workforce needs and design appropriate staffing plans. This means undertaking workforce assessments, identifying gaps and considering diverse solutions.

### **Discussion of recommendations**

37. Draft Recommendations 1 and 2 on the two Technical Items of the Conference were presented to participants and put forward for discussion. Both draft Recommendations were submitted for adoption at the Friday session with amendments as per participants' suggestions and discussions.
38. Following adoption by the Regional Commission, the Recommendations will be submitted for endorsement by the World Assembly of Delegates in May 2023. Once endorsed by the Assembly, they will serve as an important guideline for Members of the Regional Commission for Africa, as well as for the Organisation as a whole.

### **Proposal of date and venue of the 26th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa**

39. The President of the Commission asked Delegates present if any of their countries wished to host the 26th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa in 2025.
40. The WOAHA Delegate and State Minister for Livestock and fisheries resources development sector of Ethiopia, H.E Dr Fikru Regassa Gari expressed the wish for his country to host the Conference.
41. The proposal was unanimously accepted.
42. The precise dates of the Conference will be decided later in coordination with WOAHA Director General.
43. This proposal was also unanimously confirmed and will be submitted to the formal endorsement of the Assembly of Delegates in May 2023.

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<sup>32</sup> Veterinary paraprofessional(s)

## THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2023

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### **Control of animal diseases using WOA international Standards: the Botswana experience**

44. Dr Kefentse Motshegwa, Delegate of Botswana, shared the experience of Botswana in the control of animal diseases using WOA international standards. He started with tsetse fly control (*Glossina* spp.) in the Okavango Delta highlighting the successes and challenges of different methods used between 1957-2002. These methods included aerial spraying, odour-baited insecticide treated targets, prophylactic treatment of livestock, the sequential aerosol technique (SAT) and sterile insects techniques (SIT) with the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Environmental concerns of insecticides used influenced the methods applied. These methods varied over time including new technologies which ultimately led to the successful eradication of the tsetse fly in 2002. A multi-country, cross border collaboration project of tsetse control in Angola, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia was successfully achieved.
45. Regarding FMD, the speaker focused on the recent outbreaks in north western and north eastern Botswana and how the regionalisation/zoning system facilitated the containment of the outbreaks and led to the successful control of the disease. The use of the various standards of the *Terrestrial Code* related to FMD were discussed and how they were applied for creating zones (protection zones, and containment zones) to prevent incursions and to recover the free status. The impact of wildlife on animal disease control infrastructure and the African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) as reservoir host was discussed. Botswana implemented emergency vaccination, surveillance, stamping-out, disposal by burying and slaughter with compensation and re-stocking. Botswana recommends and promotes commodity-based trade and is currently collaborating with international partners to boost livelihoods, protect the environment and control diseases.

### **Progressing in aligning PPR eradication programmes in Africa from national to continental level**

46. A special session on PPR was organised in order to give the opportunity to participants to discuss the PPR *Global Control and Eradication Strategy* (GCES) and the National Strategic Plans in more detail.
47. The session started with brief presentations from Regional Economic Communities (REC) and WOA staff regarding the Global Eradication Programme (GEP II), the current situation in Africa, next steps, highlights on the status of the Regional PPR Strategies in UMA, ECOWAS, ECCAS and IGAD. Details were also provided regarding vaccination and the WOA vaccine bank mechanism, as well as resource mobilisation. These presentations resulted in a panel discussion gathering representatives from the different Regional Economic Communities to debate three key points: 1) Coordination and harmonisation, 2) Stakeholder engagement, and 3) Resource mobilisation and advocacy.
48. With respect to coordination and harmonisation, lessons learnt from the rinderpest experience were commented, underlining the key role of surveillance (identification of hotspots), laboratory networks (also for information sharing), capacity building and partnership for a successful PPR control and eradication. All panellists acknowledged the critical role of information sharing, laboratory networks, PPR regional road maps, networks and advisory groups (such as global PPR Secretariat). A Regional Secretariat for Africa is to be established soon. Yet harmonisation should take into consideration national or regional peculiarities and adapt the strategies accordingly (e.g. PPR free zones versus infected areas, institutional challenges, political and social crises).
49. The panellists stressed the role of stakeholder engagement and pointed out that it should be improved if PPR control and eradication is to be achieved. There are several operational challenges that should be addressed in collaboration with stakeholders, such as the maintenance of the cold chain, good vaccination practices, compliance with post-vaccination sero-monitoring, improvement of awareness and capacity building.

50. In all regions it is urgent to diversify partners and advocate for PPR control and eradication, as well as taking the opportunity of grants and funds available. The need for common approaches for resource mobilisation such as national public funds (through loans), support provided by development partners (EU) and others, respectively representing 30%, 30%, and 40% of AU-IBAR resources for PPR control and eradication was underlined.

### **Technical visit**

51. Participants greatly appreciated the two technical visits organised during the afternoon by the host country.

## **FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2023**

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### **Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs): Calculating the economic burden of animal health (Ethiopia case study)**

52. Ms Edna Massay Kallon, GBADs programme lead at WOAHA, briefly commented on the GBADs programme, which is co-led by WOAHA and the University of Liverpool and implemented by a consortium of partners at the cross-roads of public policy, private sector strategy, and academia.
53. The GBADs Consortium is working to develop an assessment of the economic burden of animal diseases; to provide estimates of net losses of production, expenditures, and trade impacts; and to identify where the burdens occur, to whom and because of which causes and risk factors.
54. During the session, several members of the GBADs Consortium presented on: (i) Progress and outputs from the Ethiopia country case study, (ii) Interactions with national stakeholders in Ethiopia, and (ii) lessons learned and linkages with other ongoing and pipeline case studies. Ethiopia is the programme's first case study, with the aim to demonstrate a proof-of-concept.
55. Among the key conclusion to be highlighted are:
- Good understanding of the socio-economic impacts of transboundary animal disease is key in supporting the investment case for risk management through implementation of WOAHA's international standards.
  - WOAHA encourages Veterinary Services to work in close collaboration with the various relevant Ministries and mainly between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance.
  - There is a strong need for Members to develop capabilities in social/economic analyses.
  - Members were invited to follow the progress of the Global Burden of Animal Diseases programme which first priority is to ensure accurate and complete animal population data. These data are provided by Members in the annual report to WAHIS, thus, Members' support on this is much appreciated.

### **Observatory: Evidence-based approach to address Members' needs and encourage the implementation of international standards**

56. Dr Laure Weber-Vintzel, Head of the Data Integration Department, reported on the operationalisation of the WOAHA Observatory. She reminded the audience that this programme aims at monitoring the implementation of WOAHA international standards. She presented the first annual report of WOAHA's Observatory, recently published. Composed of 12 thematic sections, the Observatory annual report is available in three different formats: a complete narrative, a series of 12 user-friendly executive summaries and a series of 12 interactive dashboards ([Implementation of standards: the Observatory Annual Report - WOAHA](#)). The speaker explained how to navigate the annual report and how to make use of the data. The main findings and recommendations of this report were also highlighted.



57. Main conclusion of the presentation:

- One of the main reasons the Observatory was created was to make sure WOA's international standards are adapted to Members' needs and therefore well implemented;
- The Observatory objective is not only to collect data but to find the best ways to improve and prioritise capacity building activities based on the collected data and identified Members' gaps/needs. There is a strong connection between the Observatory and WOA's Training Platform. Information gathered from the Observatory will feed into the main priorities and needs for training, it will also help to adjust services, if needed, to better adapt them to Members' needs.

**Revision of the Terrestrial Code:  
Process, February report highlights and key topics for Africa region**

58. Dr Etienne Bonbon, President of the *Terrestrial Code* Commission presented some key topics addressed by the Code Commission following their February 2023 meeting. He outlined the Code Commission work programme and the coordination with the other Specialists Commissions to ensure harmonisation and consistency of standards. Dr Bonbon, informed the audience on the 18 annexes on the texts proposed for adoption in May 2023 and provided details on the most important ones for the Africa region.
59. Regarding the draft revised FMD chapter, key points highlighted include updates to the case definition recognising that *transmission* equates to *infection*, the inclusion of safe commodities, conditions for the introduction of vaccinated animals from zones free-with-vaccination to zones free-without-vaccination, and the transition from 'free with' to 'free without' and vice-versa. Dr Bonbon mentioned that the time period for the recovery of the FMD free status of the containment zone was proposed to be extended to up to 24 months of its approval. Other key updates include a new article on small ruminant and pig meat from infected zones where an official control programme exists and the ongoing work to harmonise the FMD chapter with other chapters with official WOA status including AHS and CBPP. The latter two are circulated for Members' comments.
60. In terms of rabies, the scientific rationale for the 30-day time lapse after the post-vaccination serological (titer) test for importation of dogs was explained. Parenteral vaccinations in mass vaccination programmes and an identification system are part of the official control programmes in dogs whereas wildlife is not yet included in the official control programmes in the *Terrestrial Code*.
61. The RVF chapter has been a comprehensively revised, mainly to clarify the obligations of Members to notify RVF when there is an epidemic in an endemic country or zone, to provide further guidance on surveillance to Members on factors that may signal a transition to an epidemic of RVF and to provide tools for transparency, prevention, control and safe trade.
62. The draft revised BSE<sup>33</sup> Chapter includes the withdrawal of *atypical* BSE from compulsory notification and from risk assessments, while maintaining its management and monitoring, and the feed ban, which remains compulsory for risk status. BSE surveillance has shifted from active to targeted passive surveillance, which is a big positive change for Africa as it is less prescriptive and not point-based.
63. Dr Bonbon informed the Conference of the newly developed small ruminants' theileriosis chapter following the listing of the disease and the development of the corresponding Manual chapter that should improve transparency, prevention, control and safe trade. Dr Bonbon reminded the Delegates that the General Session will be shorter and that they should come prepared to make concrete proposals.
64. Regarding the draft chapters for Members' comments before July 2023, collection and processing of semen of animals, Q fever, Camelpox, the welfare of animals during slaughter etc., were mentioned.

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<sup>33</sup> Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

65. In response to questions, Dr Bonbon highlighted the importance of reading the reports of the other Specialists Commissions and *ad hoc* Groups in conjunction with those of the Code Commission, to understand the rationale for the proposed texts. The reports are available on the new Delegates portal ([Delegates portal - Home](#)) and the Specialists Commissions' pages on the WOAHA website. WOAHA's informal procedure for dispute mediation is available to Members if bilateral agreements on trade facilitation fail following the adoption of new standards. He encouraged the Delegates of the Africa region to engage in the WOAHA standard-setting process, to be informed on the proposed texts, their background and rationale, and to improve exchanges between the Code Commission and Delegates.

### **Adoption of Recommendations and summary report**

66. Dr Eloit summarised the main conclusions of the Conference highlighting, among others, the discussions regarding PPR and Rabies which are key topics in the region, for which there is a Global strategy targeting eradication by 2030 and which compete for the resources of the Veterinary Services. It was also underlined that buy-in and commitment from Members including from policymakers and authorities at national but also at sub-regional level are key to reach disease eradication and WOAHA is ready to support Members. Another important point highlighted during the Conference was the importance for WOAHA Members to make efforts to continue their commitment to disease surveillance and improve notification of diseases in compliance with the *Terrestrial Code* as well as the need for a coordinated and harmonised approach at regional and sub-regional levels when it comes to disease control. The operationalisation of the One Health approach was also discussed pointing out that it is key for Members to ensure leadership at national level so that the animal health sector be well involved in the One Health agenda. Members were also encouraged to give more visibility to data and data management in the Veterinary Services as well as to take advantage of all the material and tools provided by WOAHA and to adapt them to their national specificities and needs to ensure advancing in diseases control and eradication as well as in the One Health operationalisation at national and regional levels. Another important point commented during the week was the workforce situation in Africa and the need for Members to develop a veterinary workforce development strategy. WOAHA has put several tools at the service of Members including PVS evaluation missions, gap analysis missions, workforce assessments, veterinary legislation support missions, and VPP curriculum review missions.
67. Finally, Dr Eloit explained the procedures for adopting the report and the recommendations of the Conference. The draft final report will be published on the Conference website ([25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa \(Gaborone, Botswana\) - WOAHA - Africa](#)) and participants will have the opportunity to provide comments until a certain deadline, those comments will be then taken into account before closing the report. However, the recommendations had to be adopted during the current session and cannot be changed subsequently, only editing being accepted.
68. The two draft recommendations were unanimously adopted and will be published along with the final report.

### **Closing ceremony**

69. Dr Monique Eloit started by stating that this was the end of a beautiful week, rich in exchanges and perfect to re-establish relationships and networking which is key to build partnership and ensure advancing together. She thanked the Minister of Agriculture of Botswana, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance, as well as all other ministers that supported the organisation of such an important event for the region. She also thanked and congratulated the Delegate of Botswana as well as all the colleagues from the Veterinary Services for the excellent work done to ensure the success of the Conference as well as for their hospitality. She thanked the Delegates for their active participation and engagement in discussions during the whole week, and the speakers for the excellent work done and time devoted to the preparation of the presentations. She also thanked the national partners that supported the Conference, the interpreters and the whole backstage team that made the holding of this event possible. She concluded by mentioning that the 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa was a success.
70. Dr Honoré Robert N'lemba Mabela, President of the Regional Commission for Africa, expressed his gratitude to Botswana and WOAHA colleagues for the outstanding Regional Conference and to the Delegates, speakers for their active participations. He also thanked all those working on backstage to ensure the success of the Conference.
71. Dr Kefentse Motshegwa, Delegate to Botswana, thanked WOAHA Subregional Representation for all the support provided to Botswana in the preparation of the Conference. He also thanked all participants and speakers for the high quality of the deliberations and active discussions. He wished participants a safe travel back home and declared the Conference closed at 12:00 p.m.